

Dance Index



MISS MARY ANN LEE.
as Posture in la Belle fille de Toul

PARK THEATRE.

Reduction of Prices,

The Manager respectfully announces that the Prices of Admission for the future, will be as follows:—

BOXES, FIRST TIER.....	75 CENTS
SECOND & THIRD TIERS.....	50 CENTS
PIT.....	50 CENTS
GALLERY.....	25 CENTS

Doors open at 7 o'clock, and the Performance will commence precisely at 7½ o'clock

↳ Pit and Gallery Tickets for Sale at the Box Office every day.

MISS MARY ANNE LEE'S BENEFIT,

TUESDAY EV'NG, APRIL 14th

The Performances will commence with, 6th time in America, an entirely new and original Drama, in 3 parts, entitled the

CRICKET

↳ **GENERAL DANCE BY THE CHARACTERS.**

After which the New Grand Ballet, in 2 Acts, of

GISELLE, OR, THE WILIES.

The Scenery entirely New, by..... Mr. Hillyard
The Costumes, by..... Mr. Dejonge | The Machinery, by..... Mr. Speyers

The Scene lies on the banks of the Rhine, and is founded on an old German Legend.

Giselle, a beautiful girl, the daughter of Bertha, is loved by Albrecht, the young lord of the neighboring castle, who disguises himself as a peasant, and so such, wins the heart of the simple girl. Hilariou, the rejected suitor of Giselle, suspecting Albrecht is not what he appears to be, steals into his cottage, and discovers his true rank by means of his sword. The festival of the vintage takes place, and Hilariou vows revenge. The Duke, the daughter Bathilda and attendants, call at the cottage of Bertha on their return from hunting, and Hilariou seizes the opportunity of satisfying his vengeance. The real rank of Albrecht is discovered, and Giselle finds he is the betrothed husband of the Princess Bathilda. The beautiful peasant girl once so happy and fond of dancing, attempts heroic—she is saved from self-destruction by the hand of her lover, but shocked at his baseness, her heart breaks, she dies. It is the fate of Giselle, after death, to be transformed into a Wile or Dancing Fairy, as a punishment for her enthusiastic love of dancing during life. The second act discovers a lovely scene as midnight on the banks of a lake near which is placed the grave of Giselle. The Queen of the Wiles rising from the earth announces her attendant spirits and proposes the reception of Giselle into their band. Her spirit rises from the grave and the introduction takes place.—The Phantom compels the wretched Hilariou, who falls into their power, to dance until he is exhausted, and then throw him into the lake—such is the power conferred on the Wiles over all unfortunate travellers who witness their revels.—At dawn of day their power ceases.—Albrecht seeks the grave of Giselle—She appears to his view and at command of her Queen, reluctantly attempts to seduce her lover to join in the fatal dance—she fascinates his eyes by her coquetry—flies from him, bounds from the branches of trees over his head, and he is on the point of becoming the victim of the Fairies, as the unhappy Hilariou has been before him, when Giselle bids him seek protection from the Cross—he does so—the dawn breaks, the Fairies disappear, their power having ceased until night—and Albrecht is preserved.

Giselle, a Peasant Girl transformed into a Fairy..... Miss Mary Anne Lee
First time in New York.

Myrrha, Queen of the Fairies..... Mrs. Hunt
Princess Bathilda..... Miss Gordon

Fairies, by the Ladies of the Corps de Ballet.

Prince Albrecht, disguised as a Peasant, in love with Giselle..... Mr. G. W. Smith
Hilariou, Giselle's jealous lover..... King | Grand Duke of Warsaw, father of Bathilda..... Anderson

Wilfride, Squire to the Prince..... Crocker | Corps de Ballet: Hunter, Peasants, &c.

View on the Rhine. Phantom Lake, and Retreat of the Wiles.

In the course of the Ballet, a variety of dances by Miss Mary Anne Lee, Mrs. Hunt, Mr. G. W. Smith and the Corps de Ballet.

The whole to Conclude with the **Grand Ballet Dance**

EL JALEO DE XERES

By Miss Mary Anne Lee.

Mr. Hackett will appear on Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Program of Mary Ann Lee's appearance in "Giselle"
(New York, 1846)

Dance Index

Founders

LINCOLN KIRSTEIN
BAIRD HASTINGS
PAUL MAGRIEL

Editor

DONALD WINDHAM

Comment

Lillian Moore chronicled the adventures of "The Petipa Family in Europe and America" for DANCE INDEX, May 1942, and gave us the story of "John Durang, The First American Dancer" last August.

It is our intention to continue issuing similar monographs on other Americans, and to prepare the ground for an authoritative history of the dance in America, which in time must be written. Already George Chaffee, Marion Hannah Winter and, in a slightly different but sometimes analogous field, Rosamond Gilder, are furthering the critical and historical structure which the late Fredrick King started but was unable to finish fifteen years ago.

DANCE INDEX, sooner or later (and we here apologise for our tardiness the prospect of which we warned our readers some time ago), will publish monographs on George Washington Smith, who appears briefly in this issue as one of Miss Lee's partners, on "The Black Crook" and its subsequent progeny of extravaganzas, on the Kiralfy Brothers spectacles, on the dances presented in P. T. Barnum's various enterprises, and on the in-

fluence of Delsarte in America. We are open to suggestions of other new subjects and authors.

Cyril Beaumont, the British editor and critic, writes us from England of our fine reception there. Also from England we have received an interesting idea for an article on unknown aspects of the choreographer, Salvatore Vigano.

Our next issue will be a double number presenting a short history of the ballet in Soviet Russia and a check list of their repertory. As the flow of such information from Russia to this country has been slow in the last ten years, we would like to hear immediately from anyone who has factual information, photographs or other iconography concerning this period.

* * *

The Editor and Miss Moore wish to acknowledge the help of Dr. William Van Lennep, Curator of the Harvard Theatre Collection, who secured the lithographs, playbills, and letter illustrating this issue.

Cover: Lithograph of Mary Ann Lee as Beatrix in *La Jolie fille de Gand*, 1845.

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Vol. II. No. 5. May, 1943

MARY ANN LEE

FIRST AMERICAN GISELLE

BY

LILLIAN MOORE

Mary Ann Lee was the first American dancer to attain nation-wide fame as an exponent of the classic ballet. Her career was an amazing triumph over the most crushing of obstacles, extreme poverty. Her father had been a minor actor and circus performer. Although he never attained the slightest degree of success or renown, he must have had an appealing personality, which his charming daughter seems to have inherited. He is mentioned in mildly affectionate terms in several theatrical autobiographies of the period. Charles Durang, in his "History of the Philadelphia Stage," mentions Lee's engagement at the Olympic Circus in that city in 1822, shortly before the birth of Mary Ann: "Charles Lee was a very useful little member of the corps, filling up important niches in stage and ring performances. Charley was a general favorite — a reward due to his very obliging and honest good nature. He was the father of Mary Ann Lee, who, for many years, was our city's favorite — a graceful and agile danseuse. The winning arch smile that wreathed her features, while reclining into attitudes at the end of every strain, ever won applause, and harmonized with the excellence of her very neat *pas*."

The actor Joseph Cowell also records his friendship with Charles Lee. Mentioning the fact that some critics declared Mary Ann Lee to be the equal of Fanny Elssler, he continues: "I am no judge of dancing, and I never saw Elssler; but I hope it's the fact; for her father was a worthy creature, and a great favorite of mine, and I have known her to be a very good little girl ever since she was dancing in her mother's arms, and I am old-fashioned enough to have a strong prejudice in favor of old acquaintances. . . ."

Mary Ann's father died when she was a child, and upon her small shoulders fell the task of supporting the widowed mother. Sheer necessity forced her to develop an extraordinary versatility as a dancer and actress: she appeared in everything from Shakespeare to burlesque, danced everything from *La Sylphide* to the Sailor's Hornpipe, and on occasion she even sang!

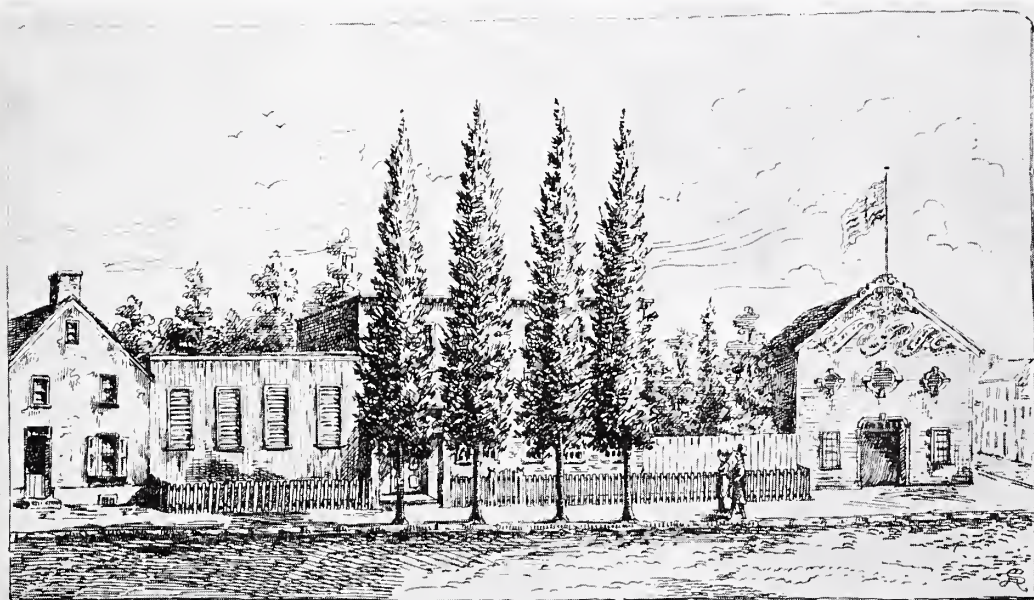
Born in Philadelphia, about 1823, she appeared as a child actress in most of the theatres of that city. At the age of eleven, she played Francie in *Guy Mannering*, Eustache in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and a Page in *Romeo and Juliet*.

She made her official debut as a dancer at the Chestnut St. Theatre on December 30, 1837, as Fatima in *The Maid of Cashmere*, an English version of Auber's opera-ballet *Le Dieu et la Bayadère*. Among the dancers of the *corps de ballet* was listed a Mrs. Lee. Could this have been Mary Ann's mother?

On this occasion the principal role, Zoloe, was danced by Augusta Maywood, step-daughter of the manager of the theatre. Augusta was twelve, Mary Ann but slightly older. In the monograph on Miss Maywood which appeared in *DANCE INDEX* last February, Marian Hannah Winter has mentioned this double debut and the rivalry which subsequently developed between the two child stars. The incident had little importance in the career of Miss Maywood, who soon left provincial Philadelphia for triumphs in New York and Paris, Italy and Austria. To Mary Ann Lee, however, this joint debut with Maywood was an event of major significance. Augusta was technically the superior of the two, and the desire to equal her in every way seems to have provided Mary Ann Lee with

the incentive to study continually with the best teachers to be found in this country, and eventually to follow her former rival to the ballet school of the Paris Opera.

Both Maywood and Lee had received their first training in Philadelphia under a Frenchman, P. H. Hazard, who had at one time been a member of the *corps de ballet* of the Paris Opera. He staged the dances for their debut performance. The two young dancers appeared together in a famous *pas de deux*, the Trial Dance, which created such excitement among the members of the audience that descriptions of their behavior equal the wildest demonstrations of present-day balletomanes. The *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*, after one performance, said: "As the opera proceeded bouquets and wreaths were literally showered upon the stage by the admirers of both Augusta and Miss Lee. We never saw so much enthusiasm as was exhibited; peals followed the bestowal of each present, and it kept poor "Brahma" all the time walking from side to side of the stage gathering up the trophies, until he entirely forgot the bestowal of the stage wreath



VAUXHALL GARDEN AND THEATRE, AND COOK'S CIRCUS,
Bowery, New York, 1835.

Vauxhall Garden and Theatre, Bowery, New York, 1835, where Mary Ann Lee appeared.

which in his character he should have awarded to Fatima... We counted twenty wreaths thrown while Augusta was dancing, besides sundry bouquets, etc. — in one garland glittered a splendid diamond ring. Miss Lee also had her fair share of the honors."

As nearly as it is possible to judge from contemporary accounts, Augusta Maywood must have been at that time much the more brilliant dancer of the two. But Mary Ann, even then, had a winning personality and a way with an audience. Whatever the respective merits of the two little ballerinas, their rivalry added to the excitement of their engagement, and *The Maid of Cashmere* played to crowded houses for more than three weeks.

On January 5 the manager, Robert Campbell Maywood, announced a performance for the benefit

of his step-daughter. The audience demanded that Mary Ann also be granted a benefit. This request was loudly repeated every evening until Maywood, to placate the ticket-holders, was forced to announce that Miss Lee would be given a benefit on January 12. This he did most reluctantly, complaining that since he had paid for Mary Ann's dancing lessons, he deserved the profit he was reaping from her talent.

The benefit duly took place, and *la petite Augusta*, as she was called, graciously volunteered her services. Mary Ann danced her usual role of Fatima, and also appeared as "Little Pickle" in the afterpiece, a farce called *The Spoiled Child*. The house was jammed, and the little dancers reaped another rich harvest of flowers and gifts, while Mary Ann collected a most welcome profit.



Lithograph of a contemporary production of "*La Bayadère*" showing Madame Augusta, with whom Mary Ann Lee danced, in the leading role. (ca. 1839)

Next day the Philadelphia Saturday Courier carried *two* complete criticisms of the performance, one pro-Maywood, one pro-Lee. "Miss Lee is a clever little girl enough in her place," wrote the first reporter condescendingly, "and we are glad the excitement caused a crowded house, but no one in their senses pretends seriously to compare her forced and trembling performances to the finished, graceful, flexible, and confident figures of the astonishing Augusta." The other critic, however, wrote: "We are heartily glad it was a triumphant overflow, a deserving tribute to merit, and a handsome offering to an orphan daughter. Miss Lee deserves all praise for her improvement. Her poetry of motion is of the style of Madame Augusta, the celebrated dancer brought out from France, at the Park, New York."*

In February, la petite Augusta was whisked off to New York for a successful debut at the Park Theatre. Mary Ann, who had also been offered an engagement there, chose to remain in Philadelphia with her mother. Within a week she was dancing Fatima again, this time in support of the French ballerina Madame LeComte, who was appearing as guest star at the Chestnut St. Theatre. Later in the same year LeComte was to bring Marius Petipa and his father to the United States for a brief and not too happy visit.

In March little Augusta returned from New York, bringing copies of the charming lithographic portrait which had just been published there. Mary Ann Lee's supporters promptly retaliated by arranging for her portrait as Fatima to be published in Philadelphia, and announcement of its publication appeared in the Public Ledger on March 22. (See illustration, page 69)

Meanwhile Mr. Maywood had staged a new ballet for his step-daughter. This was *The Dew Drop*, or *La Sylphide*. It seems to have been a cross between the famous Taglioni ballet *La Sylphide* and an opera called *The Mountain Sylph*, which was popular in the United States during the 1830's. At any rate, although it may not have been the authentic *Sylphide*, it must have been based upon it. New and very effective scenery was painted for the occasion by Russell Smith, staff artist of the rival theatre on Walnut Street. Augusta Maywood danced the title role, and Mary Ann Lee was Flora. The first performance took place on March

17, 1838. The ballet was amazingly successful, and houses were crowded in spite of stormy, disagreeable weather. *La Sylphide* ran until early April.

In the spring the entire Maywood family departed for Europe. Augusta never returned to the United States. At this time, however, Mary Ann Lee must have determined that some day she too would study under the great European masters of the ballet.

For the present she remained in Philadelphia, and consoled herself with some June performances of *La Bayadère* and *La Sylphide*, this time in support of a young dancer from New York, Miss Harriet Wells. In *Sylphide*, Mary Ann's role was enriched by the addition of a Scotch Pas Seul, and Mrs. Lee also appeared on the program, as Jessamine. Mary Ann continued to dance and act at the Chestnut St. Theatre until summer, when she ventured as far afield as Baltimore. There she appeared for the first time in the title role of *La Sylphide*. Her success may be judged from the following effusion, which was the tribute of an anonymous admirer:

"La Sylphide"*

"Ne'er did the Grecian chisel trace
A Sylph, a Naiad, or a Grace
Of finer form or lovelier face;
And seldom was a wreath amid
Such locks of golden beauty hid;
Nor ever beamed of heavenly hue,
Eyes of more sweet and radiant blue;
Each changeful movement of her breast,
Her varying features still confest;
Whether joy danced in her bright eye,
Or woe and Pity claimed a sigh,
Or Filial Love was glowing there,
Or meek devotion poured a prayer,
And while upon her speech there hung
Accents more sweet than wind harps tongue,
These silver sounds, so soft, so clear,
The listener held his breath to hear.

— I.H., M.D."

In the autumn Mary Ann transferred her allegiance to the Walnut St. Theatre. Since the occasion of her benefit performance, Mary Ann's relations with Mr. Maywood had been somewhat strained. On the other hand, Francis Courtney Wemyss, manager of the Walnut, was a great admirer of hers. He did much to further her career, and later paid tribute to her talents in his book, *The Life of an Actor and Manager*. On September 13, 1838,

* The Philadelphia Saturday Courier, August 25, 1838.

* This Madame Augusta should not be confused with Maywood. The French ballerina enjoyed a long and distinguished career in this country, while the American never appeared here after 1838. Before she attained stardom Mary Ann Lee was often to dance supporting roles in the company of Madame Augusta.



La Smolenska as danced by Miss Mary Ann Lee. — Pub. Wm. H. Oakes, Boston, 1842. — (Vignette; $4\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{3}{4}$ h. No artist.) — B. W. Thayer & Co's. Lithog'y., Boston.

The face does not flatter this lovely artist but the lithograph is an excellent and striking study; in black and white, yet full of contrasts and 'color'. — from "American Music Prints of the Romantic Ballet" by George Chaffee.

he produced for her a new ballet called *The Lily Queen*, in which Mary Ann had the imposing title of "Queen Lily of the Silver Stream." There seems to be no record of the composer, although "new music and scenery" were advertised; but the story

and choreography were by J. H. Amherst, an obscure but versatile young man who appears to have been a dancer, writer, circus performer and horse trainer. Unfortunately the success of his ballet was short-lived, and a few days later Mary Ann was appearing, more humbly, in "a new Tambourine Dance."

Throughout the winter season Miss Lee remained a member of the company at the Walnut St. Theatre. She acted everything from "Little Pickle" to the role of Albert in *William Tell*, in support of the great tragedian Edwin Forrest. On the slightest provocation, however, she would execute "A new Fancy Dance," or a "Grand Pas Seul." She continued her lessons with Hazard, and in the spring came her reward. On April 27, 1839, she was permitted to essay for the first time the leading role, Zoloe, in *La Bayadère*. This time she had an outstanding success, which led to an engagement at the Bowery Theatre in New York.

Mary Ann Lee made her New York debut on June 12, 1839, in *La Bayadère*, a ballet which seems to have been associated with almost every important event in her career. A few days later a new ballet called *The Sisters* was produced for her. It seems to have been one of those very rare things, an original American ballet, not based on any of the latest successes of the Paris Opera or Drury Lane. Yet the directors of the Bowery were so modest about it that they neglected to mention in the advertisements the names of the composer, ballet master or designer! All we know is the cast: Mr. Addis was Henry, Mr. Rice was Cormac, Miss Lee was Fanny, one of the sisters, and Julia Turnbull was the other sister, Laura. The new ballet ran for only a week.

This engagement at the Bowery marked Mary Ann Lee's first professional association with a dancer whose career to a certain extent paralleled hers, and who was certainly her most formidable American rival. Born in New York in 1822, Julia Turnbull had been on the stage since she was six, and had been dancing and playing children's roles at the Park Theatre ever since 1834. Although she had appeared in innumerable brief *divertissements*, *The Sisters* was the first ballet in which she had a chance to play a role of length and distinction, and in it she won her first major success. When Fanny Elssler came to the United States in the following year, she promptly engaged Julia Turnbull as soloist in her company. During the first New York performances of Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl*, in 1844, Miss Turnbull and Jules Martin, brother of Madame LeComte, were the principal dancers. The ballet

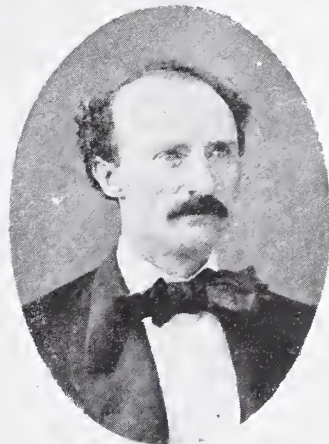
was lavishly staged and prominently featured during the long run of this popular opera, and the engagement further enhanced Miss Turnbull's growing reputation as a ballerina. Her first spectacular success, however, came in the spring of 1847, when *The Naiad Queen* was produced for her. Mary Ann Lee was to retire in this same spring, and thenceforth Julia Turnbull had no serious competitor among the American ballerinas. She danced the principal roles in *Nathalie*, *La Bayadère*, *Esmeralda*, *La Muette de Portici*, and even *Giselle*. In 1857 she retired, and lived quietly in Brooklyn until her death thirty years later.

In 1839, however, Julia Turnbull was just seventeen, Mary Ann Lee a year younger, and their rivalry added considerable spice to the summer season at the Bowery. On July 8 the President of the United States, Martin Van Buren, attended the performance, and Mary Ann Lee danced the *Cachucha* for him. This particular *Cachucha* had been arranged by her Philadelphia teacher, the accomplished Hazard; later Mary Ann was to learn the famous *Cachucha* danced by Fanny Elssler.

During this same summer Paul Taglioni, brother of the great Marie Taglioni, was dancing at the Park Theatre with his wife Amelie. Mary Ann Lee, eager to absorb all she could learn about the classic ballet, must have studied their performances closely. It is even possible that she may have studied with Paul Taglioni, for although we have no record of it, she was hardly likely to miss such a marvellous opportunity.

After another winter spent as a member of a repertory company in Philadelphia, and varied by brief excursions to nearby cities such as Pittsburgh and Baltimore, Mary Ann Lee returned to New York in June, 1840. The great P. T. Barnum recognized her talent, and engaged her to appear at his popular place of amusement, the Vauxhall Gardens.

Fanny Elssler had just made her American debut, and was dancing at the nearby Park Theatre. Miss Lee seized this opportunity to study with Elssler's partner, James Sylvain, who taught her all of Elssler's famous character dances: the *Cracovienne*, the *Bolero*, *El Jaleo de Jerez*, *La Smolenska*, and the famous *Cachucha*. Mary Ann Lee actually dared to challenge the great Elssler by dancing the *Cachucha* at Vauxhall while Fanny was performing it at the Park. Miss Lee won the victory in the eyes of at least one observer, for the *New York Herald* for July 1, 1840, contained the following note: "Miss Lee, the charming dancer, was received with shouts of applause, on Monday night. In the



From George Washington Smith

George Washington Smith, first American premier danseur.

Cachucha dance, she can hardly be excelled." However, most critics agreed that while Mary Ann was very beautiful, and danced with much spirit, she could not seriously be compared with Elssler or the other really great ballerinas of the period.

At her benefit performance at Vauxhall on July 13 (a program quaintly announced as "a splendid bill, at this splendid place, for the benefit of this splendid girl"), Miss Lee proved her versatility by contrasting a classic variation from *La Sylphide* with a *Hornpipe*!

Thenceforth Mary Ann Lee made extensive tours throughout the United States, going as far south as New Orleans and Mobile. She was a particular favorite in Boston, where she danced frequently. The Cambridge students were among her most

ST. CHARLES THEATRE.

The unrivalled American Dancers

Miss Julia Turnbull!

AND

Miss Mary Ann Lee!

Will again appear on the same evening—having been welcomed last night by a crowded and brilliant audience, with every token of approbation.

Second Appearance of

MR. G. W. SMITH,

MR. LOVELL,

His Third Appearance.

This Evening, TUESDAY, Dec. 8,
Will be acted, the Drama in two acts, of
1846

ROBERT MACAIRE

ROBERT MACAIRE,
Jacques Stop,
Germinal,
Dumont,
Charles,
Pierre,
Louis,
Sergeant Loupy.

Soldiers, Peasants, &c.

MR. LOVELL,
Owens,
Hickson,
Caulfield,
Adams,
Fray,
Deering,
Truett.

Marie,
Clementine,
Male and Female Dancers, by Ladies and Gentlemen of the Company.

After which, the

MAZOURKA

Arranged as a Pas De Deux, will be danced by

Miss MARY ANN LEE & Mr. G. W. SMITH

To be followed by the celebrated Musical Spectacle of the Ballet Opera of "LA BAYADERE," and of—

Buy it, Dear!
'TIS MADE OF CASHMERE!

FERREOUS, (a very mysterious wanderer, supposed to be very mysterious.)
All Four, (the Parish over-seer, devoted to love and liquor.)
Stop-Jaw, (his Irish factious, a perfect villain) in his way.)
Tangens, Messrs. Ryan, Foster, Gentry, Nunn, Hickey, Farr, Uhl, Fredericks, Pottle, McVie & Thorpe.

Mr. Solo, (a Broom Girl, who dances into the good graces of the Ferreous, and steps into the affections of the Great Calicoes.)
Fatty Ma, (the companion of Solo—her rival in Broom-sweeping, uncontrollable and dancing, with an extra-shake-or-so.)
Mr. Wright.

Mr. Tink, (a vocal broom-girl, who has a voice in the matter.)
Broom Girls, Messrs. Fanny Deering, Stannard, E. Deering, Meadows, M. Deering, Hubbard, Mrs. Caulfield, and Mrs. Deering.

During the Piece,

MISS JULIA TURNBULL

Will execute all the Dances from the celebrated Ballet Opera of "LA BAYADERE," concluding with the GREAT

TRIAL DANCE!

By Mlle. SOLO and Mlle. FATTY MA.

After which,

Miss MARY ANN LEE & Mr. G. W. SMITH

Will appear in the celebrated PAS DE DEUX from the new Ballet of

LA GIZELLE!

In conclusion, MISS JULIA TURNBULL will Dance the new

PAS VENITIANA!

BOXES open at a quarter past 6, and the Curtain will rise at 7 o'clock, precisely.
OFFICE hours, from 10 until 5 o'clock, when Boxes may be secured on application to Mr. J. F. BAILEY, Clerk and Treasurer.

PRICES OF ADMISSION—Dress Circle, ONE DOLLAR. Pit, 50 Cents. Balcony and Third Tier of Boxes, 30 Cts. Free persons of Color, 20 Cts. Gallery, 10 Cts.

Printed at THE DELTA OFFICE, 112, Broadway street.

enthusiastic admirers. During an engagement in Boston in the spring of 1842, she gathered together some local dancers, coached them herself, and put on a production of La Sylphide. In addition to Ellsler's dances, she performed the Tyrolienne, which Taglioni had made famous, and something called The Opium Dance, which she had arranged herself for a play called Life in China. Next she appeared in a broad burlesque of La Bayadère, called Buy It Dear, Tis Made of Cashmere. Her role was called "Soloe"; her principal effort, the Grand Broom Dance. A few days later she was acting the part of Lisette, in The Swiss Cottage, with two interpolated songs, The Banks of the Blue Moselle, and Liberty for Me.

From one of her letters of this period, which is now preserved in the Harvard Theatre Collection, we learn that in return for all these varied efforts Miss Lee received the princely sum of \$25 a week, plus whatever she might reap at a benefit performance, some time during the season. How she managed to save anything at all is difficult to understand, but she must have done so.

Mary Ann Lee still considered Philadelphia her home, and she continued to appear there regularly every season. She had several interesting engagements in New York. In September 1842, she danced in support of Madame LeComte in the first American performances of the ballet from Robert le Diable. This ballet, with its unearthly scenes of dead nuns dancing in a deserted cemetery, had been one of the favorite vehicles of Marie Taglioni. The complete opera was not given in this country until 1845, when Julia Turnbull and Jules Martin were the leading dancers. On September 15, 1843, at the Bowery Theatre, Miss Lee undertook one of the most difficult roles in ballet repertoire, that of Julietta in Auber's opera La Muette de Portici, which was translated into English for the occasion, and re-titled The Dumb Girl of Genoa.

In spite of the fact that she was now an established favorite, with a loyal public which affectionately called her "Our Mary Ann," Miss Lee was still dissatisfied with her technical equipment. She had begun to dance professionally when she was fourteen, and since then her training and practice had been constantly interrupted by long and arduous tours. At last, in 1844, she decided that the time had come to take a year's vacation, and devote it to study in Paris.

Taking her mother with her, she sailed from New York in November. In Paris she obtained admittance to the ballet school of the Paris Opera, where she enjoyed daily lessons from the great

Jean Coralli, choreographer of *Giselle*, *Le Diable Boiteux* and *La Péri*. During her absence she was not forgotten at home. The *Spirit of the Times* for May 31, 1845, carried a delightful account of her progress:

"'Our Mary Ann,' better known as Miss Lee, is demonstrating to a perfect mathematical nicety that Native American legs are on an equal footing with the imported article even in its native state... In addition to letters from foreign correspondents we have authority for saying, that she bids fair to rival the most accomplished in her profession. She is a pupil of the celebrated M. Coralli, director of the *danse* at the Grand Opera in Paris. She is in no way connected with the *Ballet* at the Opera, although she enjoys all the advantages of receiving her lessons in the Opera building and of a seat in the director's private box on each Ballet night.

"The following extract from a letter of hers to a friend at home, will undoubtedly be appreciated by her American friends: 'Notwithstanding the charms and pleasures which are to be met with in Paris, I much prefer my own dear country. One can hardly appreciate the worth of home, until after having been in a foreign land. Here all around you have a smile in readiness, which is but a prelude to something farther, which the French call politeness — and so far as words and language go, they are exceedingly polite, (or rather *gallant*, which I think the better word) — but give me the politeness of my own countrymen, who have sincerity in their words and will accompany them with polite actions.'"

Perhaps this quaint little letter explains one reason why Mary Ann Lee, unlike the more daring Augusta Maywood, chose to return to the United States instead of remaining in Europe! When she arrived in New York in September, 1845, she brought with her not only a vastly improved technique, but a thorough knowledge of the authentic versions of *Giselle*, Taglioni's ballet *La Fille du Danube*, and Carlotta Grisi's *La Jolie Fille de Gand*. Although these classics of the ballet had been well known in Europe for a number of years, not one of them had yet been seen in New York.

Hurrying back to Philadelphia, she spent the next two months in careful preparation for a second debut. For this momentous occasion she chose *La Jolie Fille de Gand*, an elaborate three-act ballet by the French choreographer Ferdinand Albert, with music by Adolphe Adam. It had been created by Carlotta Grisi at the Paris Opera three years earlier, and Lee must have seen Grisi dance it often, during

her stay in Paris. The story is long-drawn-out, and the pantomimic action heavy and complicated. It must have been an expensive and difficult ballet to mount, for it required seven changes of scenery, a large cast, and lavish costumes. The Philadelphia manager staged it in all its original length and grandeur.

The first performance took place at the Arch St. Theatre on November 24, 1845. Mr. Wood mimed the role of the Marquis of San Lucar, Mr. Burke was Zephiros, a Dancing Master, and Mary Ann Lee was Beatrix. Other members of the cast were Madame Dunn and the well-known dancer George Washington Smith, who was soon to join Miss Lee on a long tour of the United States.

La Jolie Fille de Gand contains one famous classic variation, the *Pas de Diane*, which gave Miss Lee ample opportunity to exhibit her newly acquired technique. Her old Philadelphia friends gave her a royal welcome, the theatre was crowded every night, and the papers were full of accounts of her remarkable progress. It must have been at this time that Davignon painted and lithographed his lovely portrait of her as Beatrix. (See cover)

La Jolie Fille de Gand was given every night until December 1, when Miss Lee presented the second of the ballets she had studied in Paris. This was *La Fille du Danube*, to which she gave the new title of *Fleur des Champs*, after the name of the heroine. This ballet, choreographed by Filippo Taglioni, had been created by his daughter Marie at the Paris Opera, nine years earlier. It was a favorite of the great ballerina, who had danced it in Russia during her first visit, in 1837. Before Miss Lee's production it had been seen in the United States only at the French Opera in New Orleans, and not in New York or any northern city.

La Fille du Danube has a simple and charming little plot, concerning a girl and her lover who commit suicide by throwing themselves into the river, where they are reunited in a beautiful submarine grotto, surrounded by lovely water nymphs. The score was composed by Adolphe Adam, who also wrote *Giselle* and *La Jolie Fille de Gand*. Mary Ann Lee seems to have had a decided weakness for his music!

The principal male role, Rudolph, was danced by George W. Smith, who had a unique position among American male dancers of the nineteenth century. He seems to have been our only native *premier danseur noble*. Like Miss Lee, he was a Philadelphian, and he probably received his training

under Hazard. He served his apprenticeship at the Chestnut St. Theatre, and when Fanny Ellsler danced there shortly after her arrival in this country, she invited Smith to join her company on tour. He remained with Ellsler during her two years in America, and studied under her partner, James Sylvain. When Fanny sailed for France, she presented Smith with an engraved gold pencil as a souvenir of their professional association.

During his long career Smith danced with almost every ballerina of importance who visited this country. Among his partners were Julia Turnbull, Giovanna Ciocca, Anna Bulan, Louise Ducy-Barre, Pepita Soto, and Louise Lamoureux. For two years he toured the United States as the partner of glamorous Lola Montez, whom he considered a clever showman, but no dancer. He danced in the Monplaisir Ballet and the Ravel troupe, and for a time he appeared in Italian pantomime with the Carlo family. Among his associates he particularly admired Leon Espinosa, a brilliant technician who visited this country in the 'fifties. Espinosa's son is teaching in London today. Like most dancers of the period, Smith was an actor as well, and he appeared in support of such stars as Edwin Booth and Charlotte Cushman.

As a choreographer, Smith's achievements were numerous and varied. He staged the original Philadelphia productions of *The Black Crook*, *The White Fawn*, and *The Naiad Queen*. Many years after the retirement of Mary Ann Lee, Smith staged performances of *Giselle* and *La Fille du Danube* which must have been based on the choreographic versions she taught him on her return from France. He was actively engaged in choreography and teaching until just before his death in 1899, at the age of seventy-seven.

At the close of her engagement in Philadelphia, Mary Ann Lee gathered about her a small company consisting of Smith and six trained danseuses. With this group she toured the principal cities of the United States. Using her dancers as a nucleus for the more important roles, she would train local talent for the ensembles, and so was able to present ballets calling for large casts. Their first engagement was in Boston, where Mary Ann's loyal followers gave her a warm welcome even before she appeared, as we can judge by the following paragraph from the *Boston Transcript*:

"The first appearance of our popular danseuse, Miss Mary Ann Lee, since her return from Paris, is likely to draw out this evening one of the most brilliant assemblies ever witnessed in Boston. She comes before us once more, after a long absence,

perfected in her seductive art by all the advantages afforded by the most fashionable school of elegance and grace in Europe, and crowned with the laurels of foreign approbation. When she commenced her career on the boards of our theatres, all were captivated by the winning sweetness of her beautiful face, and the natural poetry of her bewitching figure; now we are to have the opportunity of beholding the same face and the same figure, adorned with all the embellishments of artistic refinement, and heightened by all the fascinations of cultivated taste. Among the youthful, the susceptible, the imaginative of our population, it is impossible but that her return will create a general furore, and her performances give rise to an enthusiasm that shall cause even the splendid triumphs of Ellsler to wax dim. Again will our quiet streets resound, late at night, with the noise of returning Cambridge omnibuses, and again shall we hear *La Cachucha* and the airs of *La Bayadère*, the ballet for this evening, breathed from the sighing accordion and whistled through lips Ethiopian. *Vive la danse!*"

It was during this engagement at the Howard Atheneum that Mary Ann Lee first danced *Giselle*, on January 1, 1846. This was the first American production of this long-lived ballet.* Madame Augusta, the same French dancer with whom Lee had occasionally danced at the beginning of her career, danced *Giselle* at the Park Theatre in New York on February 2, 1846, thus preceding Lee in that city by some two months; Mlle. Blangy, another popular French ballerina, also appeared in this famous role later in the same year. The Boston performance is, however, the first of which we have record, so to Mary Ann Lee must go the credit for the first American production of this great classic.

On this historic occasion the role of Albrecht was danced by George W. Smith; Myrtha, the Queen of the Wilis (erroneously called Berthe in the program) by Mrs. Hunt, and the two principal Wilis, Zulme and Mayna, by Miss Smith and Mrs.

* In his monumental *Annals of the New York Stage*, George C. D. Odell mentions a performance of a piece called *Giselle*, or *The Doomed Bride*, starring Mr. and Miss Wells, and given at the Olympic Theatre, New York, on November 1, 1841. A thorough search through the files of the New York Tribune from September 15 to December 1, 1841, has revealed no mention of this production. Mr. and Miss Wells were indeed appearing at the Olympic, but on November 1 they danced "A new Comic Harlequinade, Old Dame Trot and her Comical Cat."

If on some other date they actually did give a version of *Giselle*, however, it probably had little to do with the original ballet, which had been produced at the Paris Opera just four months earlier.



MARY ANN LEE AS FATIMA.

in the Maid of Cashmere.

April 13th 1836.

PHILADELPHIA,

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Mary Ann Lee, age 13, as Fatima in "The Maid of Cashmere." (1836)

Jones. The Prince de Courlande was Mr. Howard, the Princess Bathilde, Mrs. Howard, Wilfred, Mr. Resor, and Hilarion, Mr. Russell.

We have no adequate account of this first performance of *Giselle*. Three months later, however, Miss Lee and Mr. Smith danced it at the Park Theatre in New York, on the occasion of Mary Ann's benefit performance. Next day (April 14, 1846) the *New York Herald* commented on the huge audience which had turned out for Miss Lee, "the accomplished, modest, and beautiful American danseuse. . . It is a pleasure to every well-organized mind," continued this anonymous and benevolent critic, "to see talent and art obtain, at least in some degree, that which is the object of its painful toil and labors. . . Miss Lee enacted *Giselle* with a beauty, charm, elegance and grace that cannot be described, and we will not attempt it. . ."

Later in April a return engagement in Boston provided the opportunity for further comment on *Giselle*. The *Boston Courier* for April 22, 1846, contained the following criticism: "The graceful and pretty danseuse, Miss Mary Ann Lee, is now fulfilling a successful engagement at this popular establishment (the National Theatre). The production of *Giselle* attracted on Monday evening a full and fashionable audience, who testified their delight by loud and continued plaudits at the grace and agility of the beautiful heroine, who, independent of her salient qualifications, evinced a truthfulness of action that conveyed as plainly almost as in language, the feelings and passions of the character. She was ably supported by Mr. Smith, and the numerous members of the *corps de ballet*. The piece has been placed upon the stage without regard to expense, and with a tact, taste and ingenuity that reflects the highest honor upon the management of the theatre. We think that we are not exceeding the boundary of truth when we aver that no ballet of action has ever been produced in Boston that could bear comparison with *Giselle* . . ."

From one of Mary Ann Lee's own letters we know of her particular fondness for this ballet. In a note dated at Philadelphia on September 21, 1846, and addressed to the famous southern managers Ludlow and Smith, she writes concerning an engagement for the following winter:

"I trust that you may be able to do *Giselle* for me as this is such a lovely ballet. I know you would like it, and I am quite sure it would draw in New Orleans and Mobile. If you should think of doing it I can send you the plot. I open in *Giselle* in Charleston."

Mary Ann Lee and her little company toured extensively in the season of 1846-7. The repertoire included *Fleur des Champs*, *La Bayadère*, and *Giselle*, as well as such divertissements as the *Bolero*, the *Mazurka*, and a *Grand Pas Russe*. *La Jolie Fille de Gand* was too elaborate a production to take on tour, but Miss Lee frequently danced its best-known variation, the *Pas de Diane*, as well as the *Grand Pas de Deux*, in which she shared the honors with Smith. Another popular novelty was the *Polka*, which she had brought from Paris along with her more pretentious importations.

During this tour, however, Mary Ann Lee's health began to fail. In New Orleans, where she danced from December 7th to 17th, she became ill and was obliged to cancel several performances. Recovering, she continued bravely on her tour. In the spring it became evident that she could no longer stand the strain of constant practice, public appearances, and touring. Reluctantly she announced her coming retirement.

In May, 1847, Mary Ann Lee gave a series of farewell performances in her native Philadelphia. The piece de resistance was the inevitable *Bayadère*. Her last appearance took place at the Arch St. Theatre on June 18. The generous program consisted of a comedy, *Uncle John, a farce*, *The Loan of a Lover*, and a drama, *The Deserter*. Miss Lee's contributions were the "Trial Dance" from *La Bayadère*, and a *Pas Espagnole*.

It is difficult to give a fair and accurate estimate of Mary Ann Lee's status as an artist. She deserves great credit, of course, for her ambitious pioneer work in bringing to this country such ballet classics as *Giselle* and *La Fille du Danube*. Most contemporary critics seem to agree that while she was (with the exception of Augusta Maywood, who was dancing only in Europe), the best American ballerina of the period, she could not be compared with Elssler, the Taglionis, or the other foreign stars who visited this country. The *New York Herald* for April 16, 1846, devoted an entire article to a discussion of the ballerina: "As a *danseuse*, Miss Lee has much merit; she is hardly the equal, indeed, in many points to Augusta; her form is not so good, nor has she her muscular power, but she has great skill, much grace of movement, a pleasing countenance, a prepossessing manner, and is, we may say, superior to any other *danseuse* at present among us, except perhaps Mlle. Augusta. . . What difference time will make (and to judge by her great improvement during her stay abroad, it may make a great deal) we will not undertake to

decide. She possesses both taste and skill, united with graceful power..."

If she had been able to continue her career, Mary Ann Lee might have become a really great ballerina, for she seems to have had all the necessary attributes. She was only twenty-four when she

retired, and the critics were still noting her steady improvement. She must have been an extraordinarily beautiful woman, for almost every notice mentions her lovely face and graceful figure. Audiences seem to have liked her instinctively; it is probably that her personality was stronger than her technique.

Sup^{ts} Laerm's Hall

Manager New Orleans

Phila September 21. 4th 1846.

Respected Sir,

Yours of the 6th and 13th met come duly to hand — In reply — The first named (Dm) (Dec 4.) will suit me best, —

I trust you may be able to do "Giselle" for me as the such a lovely Ballet. I know you would like it, and I am quite sure it would draw in New Orleans, and Mobile, if you should think of doing it I am sure you the plot, — I am in "Giselle" in Charleston.

Ever truly
Yours
Mary Ann Lee,

